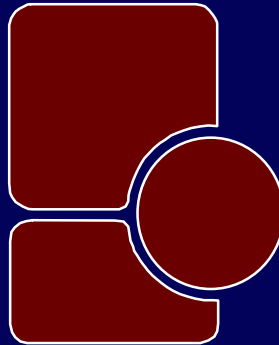


**Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission  
of the Virginia General Assembly**



**Review of the Statewide Human  
Services Information and Referral  
Program in Virginia**

**Staff Briefing  
October 12, 1999**

# Introduction

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## Staff for this study:

**Robert Rotz, Division Chief**

**Cindi Jones, Project Leader**

**Kim Snead**

# Presentation Outline

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## Introduction and Summary of Findings

- ☐ Overview of the Statewide Information and Referral Program
- ☐ Effectiveness of the Six Regional Information and Referral Centers
- ☐ Effectiveness of the State-Level Activities for the I & R Program
- ☐ Conclusion

# Definition of Information and Referral Services

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- Information and referral (I & R) is a term that is used to describe services that link people in need with the community services designated to meet those needs.
- I & R centers help callers identify agencies that provide help with needs such as emergency food, clothing and shelter, affordable day care, medical care, and other individual and family needs.

# Study Mandate

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- **HJR 502 of the 1999 General Assembly session directed JLARC to assess:**
  - **“the effectiveness of the Information and Referral Centers in the Commonwealth”**
  - **“whether any legislative changes are necessary to enable the program to work more efficiently”**

# Research Activities

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- **Site visits to each of the six regional information and referral centers and two local human service agencies in Northern Virginia**
- **Structured interviews with:**
  - **Regional I & R center staff**
  - **State staff from the Departments of Social Services, Planning and Budget, and Information Technology**
  - **Directors of local public and private human service delivery organizations**

# Research Activities (continued)

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- Review of documents, including:
  - the *Code of Virginia*
  - requests for proposals for I & R services
  - past studies of the statewide I & R program
  - various materials provided by each of the regional centers and the DSS
- Analysis of quantitative indicators of I & R center operations and performance

# Summary of Findings

- Even though a statewide program for I & R services has been established in Virginia over 20 years and has been the focus of numerous studies and recommendations for improvement, it is not a well developed system.
- The primary reasons include:
  - I & R services have not received a high priority at the State level, including DSS' delay for over two years in funding the legislative mandated child care resource and referral services
  - Few citizens that live beyond where the regional centers are located are aware of the services
  - Funding for the program has not been sufficient for the regional centers to create local partnerships to ensure a true statewide system.



# Summary of Findings (continued)

- Recommendations in the report have the potential to bring some improvements to the current I & R system.
- The larger policy question is whether the General Assembly wants to continue funding the current structure or whether more effective alternatives are available.
- Two potential improvements to ensure that all citizens across the Commonwealth have access to information concerning available public and private human services are:
  - the implementation of a 211 non-emergency statewide number that is linked to a designated human service agency in every community, and
  - the development of a State-level Internet site with links to all local, regional, and State I & R resources.

# Presentation Outline

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- ☐ Introduction and Summary of Findings
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# **The Current Statewide I & R System Was Created in 1984**

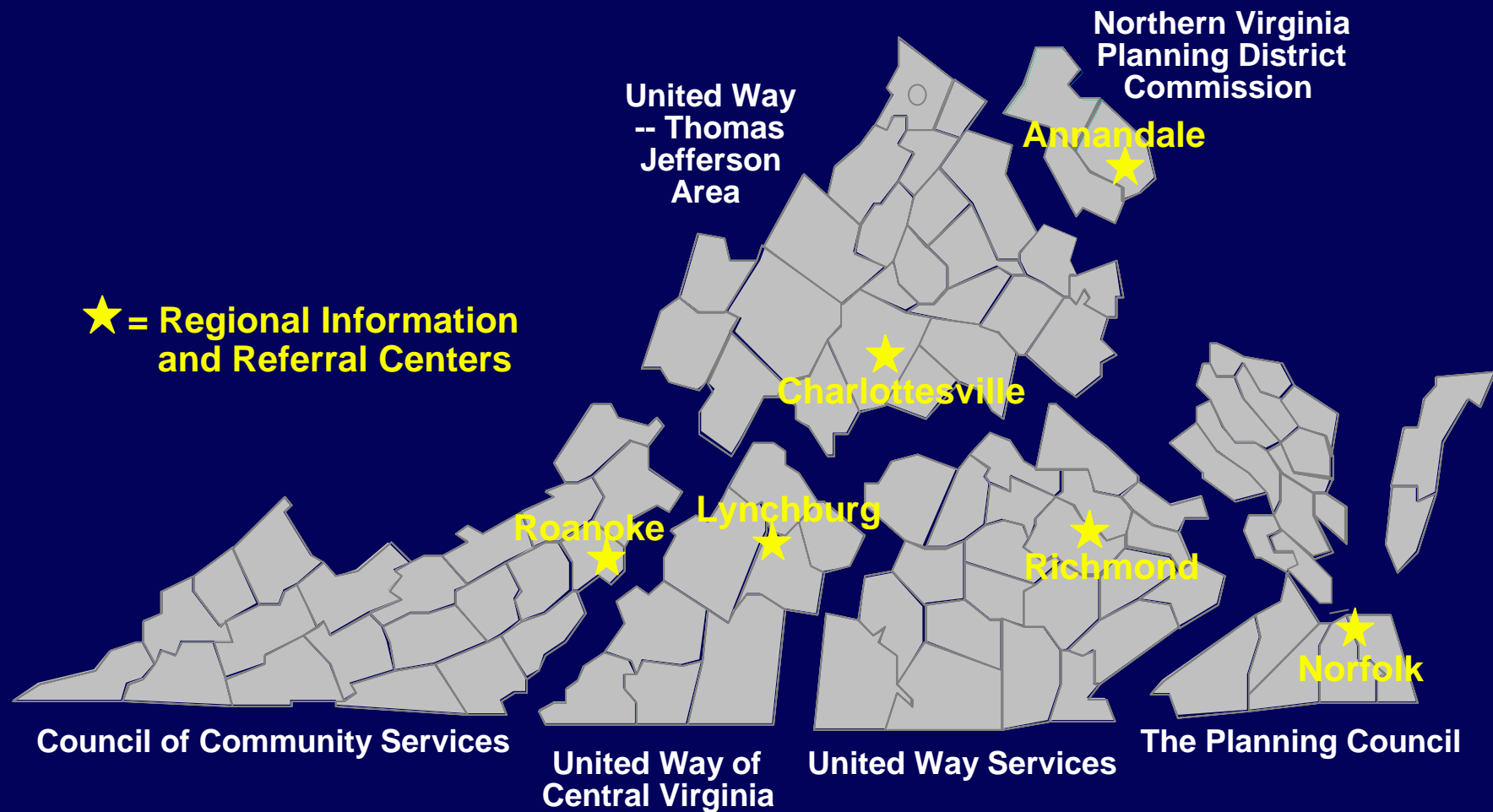
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- **The current structure of the Statewide Human Services Information and Referral Program was statutorily authorized in 1984 to complete four primary tasks:**
  - **collect and maintain resource data on a statewide basis;**
  - **link citizens with appropriate community resources;**
  - **assist in planning for human service delivery; and**
  - **provide information to assist decision-makers in allocating resources in the area of human services.**
- **A three-tiered system was established: DSS, to administer the program; six regional centers; and an Advisory Council.**

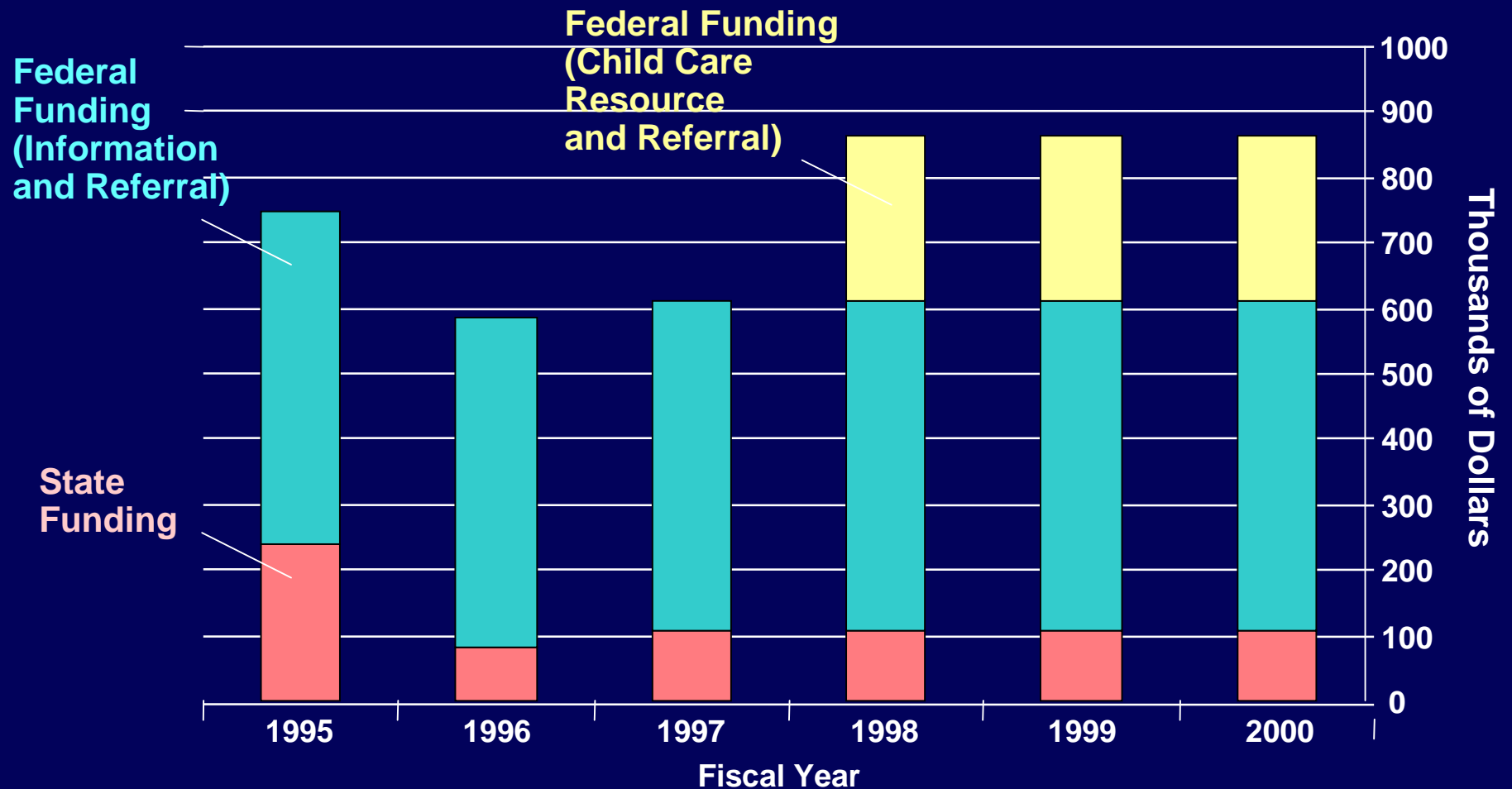
# Location and Service Areas of the Six Information and Referral Centers

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# Funding for the Statewide I & R System Has Been Constant

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# Presentation Outline

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# **Regional Centers Have Had Limited Success in Meeting the Statutory Intent**

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- **The centers appear to provide adequate I & R services to citizens within a limited geographic area.**
- **The centers have not been able to collect and maintain an accurate and complete inventory of human services in their entire region because:**
  - **funding has not been available to develop local partnerships, which would improve their ability to identify service resources throughout their region, and**
  - **the centers have not verified the service descriptions provided by the agencies.**

# Few Citizens are Aware of the I & R Regional Centers

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- There are several reasons why citizens are not aware of the I & R services provided by the centers:
  - recently, the center staff have focused more on the development of a better service resource data base than on marketing;
  - lack of funding increases over the years from the State has also impacted their ability to market their services; and
  - the statewide toll free number (1-800-230-6977) has not been useful because it is not an easy number to remember and the centers have a variety of other I & R telephone numbers.



# Information Collected by the Centers Has Not Been Well Utilized for Planning

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- Information generated by the centers are not reported in a meaningful way.
- Many local, regional, and State human resource agencies are not aware of the information that the centers could provide for planning purposes.

# I & R Centers Vary Substantially in Square Miles and Population

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	<u>Council of Community Services</u>	<u>United Way -Thomas Jefferson Area</u>	<u>Northern Virginia Planning District Commission</u>	<u>United Way of Central Virginia</u>	<u>United Way Services</u>	<u>The Planning Council</u>
<b>Center Location</b>	Roanoke	Charlottesville	Annandale	Lynchburg	Richmond	Norfolk
<b>Regional Designation</b>	Southwestern	Northwestern	Northern Virginia	Central Virginia	Richmond/ Southside	Eastern
<b>Planning Districts</b>	1-5	6-10 & 16	8	11 & 12	13-15 & 19	17, 18, 22, 23
<b>Square Miles</b>	9,095	10,596	1,312	4,705	9,728	5,162
<b>Population</b>	799,800	835,793	1,466,350	458,837	1,062,305	1,666,000

# I & R Centers Meet Operational Requirements but Serve Few Citizens

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	<u>Council of Community Services (Roanoke)</u>	<u>United Way –Thomas Jefferson Area (Charlottesville)</u>	<u>Northern Virginia Planning District Commission (Annandale)</u>	<u>United Way of Central Virginia (Lynchburg)</u>	<u>United Way Services (Richmond)</u>	<u>The Planning Council (Norfolk)</u>
Resources on Database	1,300	1,887	1,200	1,201	1,142	1,934
Hours of Operation	8:15-4:30	8:30-5:00	Varies	8:00-5:00	8:30-7:00	8:30-5:00
After-Hours Coverage	Message	Hotline	Varies	Crisis Line	Message	Message
Staff Hours Per Week	60	127	57	119	378	107
I & R Funds FY99	\$101,646	\$99,078	\$76,024	\$84,947	\$116,432	\$192,590
Match Funds FY99	\$32,331 (32%)	\$12,384 (11%)	\$18,272 (19%)	\$37,752 (31%)	\$188,201 (62%)	\$122,858 (39%)
I & R Contacts FY99	8,385	7,719	54,155	5,737	20,465	25,204

# The Cost-Effectiveness of the I & R Centers Varies

20

	<u>Council of Community Services (Roanoke)</u>	<u>United Way –Thomas Jefferson Area (Charlottesville)</u>	<u>Northern Virginia Planning District Commission (Annandale)</u>	<u>United Way of Central Virginia (Lynchburg)</u>	<u>United Way Services (Richmond)</u>	<u>The Planning Council (Norfolk)</u>
<b>I &amp; R Grant Funding Per 100 in population</b>	<b>\$12.71</b>	<b>\$11.85</b>	<b>\$5.18</b>	<b>\$18.52</b>	<b>\$10.96</b>	<b>\$11.56</b>
<b>Contacts Per 100 in Population</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>1.51</b>
<b>One-half Grant Funds/Contacts</b>	<b>\$6.06</b>	<b>\$6.42</b>	<b>This service is not funded by I&amp;R</b>	<b>\$7.40</b>	<b>\$2.84</b>	<b>\$3.82</b>

# Recommendations to Improve the Performance of I & R Centers

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- The report contains ten recommendations to improve the I & R centers' performance, including recommendations to:
  - increase outreach activities to citizens and planners
  - improve the accuracy of the service resources data base and the usefulness of reports
  - review new information telephone line requests to determine the centers' capability of providing the services
  - study the feasibility of implementing 211, a non-emergency I & R number
  - implement a State level I & R web site
- However, there appears to be a need to reassess the current regional system.

# Presentation Outline

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- ☐ Introduction and Summary of Findings
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- ☐ Conclusion

# **DSS Has Not Adequately Administered the I & R Program**

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- **Until late 1998, only one part-time staff provided State level technical and program support. Recently, DSS has increased this support to 1.5 staff.**
- **DSS has not conducted financial and program audits as required by statute.**
- **DSS has not promoted the I & R program within their own agency, across State agencies, or across the Commonwealth.**

# **DSS' Issuance of RFPs Have Been Problematic**

24

- **DSS has met the Public Procurement Act requirements in issuing I & R RFPs. However, there have been several problems:**
  - **From September 1994 until August 1999, the program has been funded through contract extensions rather than issuance of new RFPs.**
  - **Contract extensions meant that: (1) no new contractors could be selected; (2) centers were not allowed to justify increased funding needs; (3) centers could not create partnerships; and (4) DSS could not expand I & R to cover child care resource and referral as required by the General Assembly.**



# Two RFPs for I & R Services Have Been Issued by DSS in 1999

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- DSS issued an RFP in February 1999 and then subsequently withdrew it to “encourage competition.”
- Six months later, a new RFP was issued in August, which caused problems:
  - DSS held a mandatory pre-proposal meeting 10 days later; due to vacations, one current contractor was not aware of the RFP or the meeting until it was too late to respond.
  - The original RFP only allowed one month to complete the comprehensive application so potential new contractors were at a disadvantage.

# **DSS' Recent RFP Did Not Meet Appropriation Act Funding Requirements**

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- The 1997 Appropriation Act required DSS to use \$250,000 in federal funding each year beginning in FY 1998 to expand the I & R system to include child care resource and referral services.
- The first RFP to include any child care funding was in 1999, more than two years after the legislative mandate. However, the RFP issued in August 1999 included only \$149,000 for child care resource and referral, which was \$101,000 less than the amount appropriated.
- After a meeting with JLARC staff on September 10, 1999, DSS increased this funding, through an addendum, to \$399,000. This funding is effective February 2000.

# The Advisory Council Is Non-Existent

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- The Council membership and duties are statutorily defined.
- Twenty-five members are appointed by the Governor to serve as a link between the delivery of information and referral services at the local level and the State administration of the program.
- The Statewide Human Resource Service Information and Referral Advisory Council has had no members appointed since July 1998 and has not met since May 1996.

# Recommendations to Improve State-Level Administration of I & R Services

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- The report contains several recommendations to improve the State level administration of the I & R program, including recommendations to:
  - determine the extent that TANF funds can be used to fund the program
  - ensure adequate staff
  - issue RFPs in a more timely manner
  - perform financial and program monitoring of program
  - develop a statewide publicity effort
  - change the composition and appointing authority for the Advisory Council

# Presentation Outline

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# Conclusion

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- This report addressed the mandate through a series of recommendations that would improve the delivery of information and referral services somewhat through the current three-tiered system.
- However, the report underscores that none of these entities are currently meeting their statutory responsibilities for a variety of reasons.
- The larger policy question, therefore, is whether the General Assembly wants to continue to fund the current structure for providing statewide information and referral services.

## Conclusion (continued)

31

- Given the number of studies that have been conducted over the years on the establishment of a statewide information and referral system, another study of the current system is not needed.
- Two potential improvements to ensure that all citizens across the Commonwealth have access to information concerning available services are:
  - the implementation of a 211 non-emergency statewide number that is linked to a designated human service agency in every community, and
  - the development of a State level Internet site with links to all local, regional, and State I & R resources.

# Recommendation

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- **The General Assembly may wish to consider whether the current structure of providing statewide information and referral services is the most effective mechanism to ensure all citizens across the Commonwealth have access to information concerning available public and private human services. The General Assembly should request that the Secretary of Health and Human Resources develop a proposed approach for restructuring the State's information and referral services, to be presented to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by October 2000.**